



FACT SHEET

Module 14

NIGHT DRIVING

Changing Weather and Conditions of Visibility Driving at Night

Visibility limitations are placed on gathering and processing information when driving at night due to factors of reduced illumination and ability of the eyes to adjust to glare.

About 90 percent of driving choices are based on what you see. At night, your vision is reduced. To make sure you have time to react to danger, always drive slowly enough so you can stop within the distance you can see ahead. This distance is about 350 feet when using the high beams of your headlights, and about 100 feet when using the low beams. Below are some other tips to make your night driving safer.

- Increase the following distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you.
- Turn on your headlights (not just your parking lights) when driving between sunset and sunrise, or when visibility ahead has been reduced to below of 500 feet. The grey hours of twilight and dawn are the most dangerous times of the day.
- Watch for slow-moving or unlighted vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and animals.
- Allow more distance and time for passing.
- Don't drive or keep driving when you're tired.
- Never wear sunglasses when light levels are low.
- Keep your windshield clean, both inside and out.
- Keep your headlights clean. Dirt will dim their light and may distort the beam.
- Avoid looking into the headlights of oncoming vehicles. Instead, shift your eyes down to the lower right side of your traffic lane. This keeps the light from hitting your eyes directly.
- Dim your headlights to low beam when approaching or following another vehicle or on lighted roads.
- If you must park on a highway shoulder at night, turn on your emergency flashers.

Low Light Effects on Vision

- Distance you can see ahead is limited.
- Headlights provide limited illumination of off-road areas.
- Loss of contrast and impaired distance judgment.
- Glare from lights of oncoming and following vehicles and glare recovery time.

Headlight Alignment

- Properly aligned low beams:
 - Illuminate roadway 100 to 150 feet ahead.
 - Light area above road 300 to 500 feet.
 - Load weight, load distribution, and vehicle height affect light beam distance.
 - Maximum safe speed 40 to 45 mph.
- Properly aligned high beams:
 - Illuminate roadway 300 to 350 feet ahead.
 - Light area above road 500 to 1,800 feet.
 - Load, load distribution, and vehicle height affect light beam distance.
 - Maximum safe speed 55 to 60 mph.



Photo courtesy of AAA Foundation